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General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

17th plenary meeting
Friday, 22 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Brown (Liberia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the King of the Kingdom of Tonga.

King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Tupou VI: I would like to congratulate Mr. Lajčák on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him that the Tonga delegation will fully support his able leadership in revitalizing and enhancing the crucial role of the United Nations. I am grateful to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, a distinguished son of the Pacific islands region, for advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and successfully convening the inaugural Ocean Conference this year. I also commend His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for his sterling stewardship since he began his first year at the helm of the United Nations. The Tonga delegation will fully support his important reform work.

We send our message of solidarity and sympathy to the people of Mexico and to their families and friends affected by the devastating earthquake, as well as to the millions of people in the Caribbean and all those affected in recent weeks by the ravages of successive hurricanes.

My delegation and I welcome the timely and relevant theme of this year's session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". It essentially emphasizes the peaceful well-being of all people and the conservation and sustainable use of our global resources for present and future generations. What is now crucial is implementation, through sincere partnerships, to collectively achieve the targets, goals and objectives set under international law and the internationally agreed outcomes. In contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the internationally agreed blueprint for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS) and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, Tonga has established a national monitoring mechanism, for which we would like to acknowledge the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2013-2017 will conclude at the end of this year. The five-year programme cycle for 14 Pacific island countries, the United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018-2022, which was signed in August 2017 at the UNDP Pacific Office, will commence after that. The close partnership between the Government of Tonga and the United Nations system for effectively implementing the integrated Tonga strategic development framework and

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the 2030 Agenda is reinforced, through the coordination of United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018-2022, by the United Nations Joint Presence Office delivering as one, led by UNDP in Tonga. It is strategically positioned to provide technical advice to the Government, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.

We also note the Secretary-General's new senior-management appointments and welcome the appointment of the first woman from Tonga and the Pacific islands region to shepherd the important advocacy and facilitation work in the years ahead for the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. We fully support the goal of gender parity, including at all levels in the Organization.

The 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development enabled us to review seven of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 3, on good health and well-being; Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and Goal 14 on the ocean and its resources. We commend the President of the Economic and Social Council for his initiative in devoting adequate time to underscore and examine the complex sustainability challenges facing SIDS, as a special case, and thereby enhancing efforts to implement the commitments called for in the Samoa Pathway. The High-level Political Forum remains an important way to assess the follow-up, monitoring and accountability of commitments to SIDS, which are essentially linked to the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

We fully support Fiji's presidency this year of the twenty-third Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with a view to strongly addressing the adverse impacts of climate change and the urgent need for innovation in adaptation for SIDS. We note the role of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank in making disaster finance and other financial tools available to all SIDS. While we acknowledge their work on expanding the definition of fragility, we urge for further refinement of operational financing decisions so as to include the drivers of vulnerability that the Pacific islands region experiences, particularly natural disasters and adverse economic shocks. We reiterate our call for the appointment of a special representative for climate and security to ensure that the United Nations system has the appropriate tools to respond effectively and efficiently to climate change as an existential threat and a mounting security challenge for SIDS and the entire international community.

Enhanced access to modern and clean sustainable-energy services, energy efficiency and the use of economically viable and environmentally sound technology and research play a critical role in our sustainable development. Mitigation efforts are also essential to overcoming the challenges of excessive dependence on imported fossil fuels. To further strengthen international and regional cooperation, the Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency was established in Tonga in April. The Centre provides valuable support to Pacific island countries and territories in advancing their various priorities and commitments in achieving sustainable energy and contributing to SDGs 7, 9 and 13. It is a partnership that includes the Pacific Community, the Government of Austria, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the SIDS Sustainable Energy Initiative, among others. The General Assembly acknowledged the Centre at its adoption in July of the biennial resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum" (resolution 71/316).

However, we continue to experience the negative effects of ocean degradation on our livelihoods and culture, owing to anthropogenic activities and the devastating interrelated effects of climate change. We are already actively contributing to the implementation of SDG 14, and look forward to a strong collaboration with all interested parties. This year we hosted an international whaling meeting. Through a far-sighted royal decree in 1978, His Majesty the late King Tupou IV had already banned whaling in Tongan waters four years before the international ban on whale hunting came into effect. That was reaffirmed during the April 2017 international conference on "Whales in a changing ocean" that we were honoured to host.

We may be a small island State, but all small island developing States are large-ocean States. For us and our people, the successful implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 is critical to our pathway towards sustainable development and its interconnection with other goals, such as those related to food security, water and sanitation, health, economic growth, and sustainable production and consumption. We need strong political will for a whole-of-Government

approach to mainstreaming ocean-related actions from international, regional, and national development plans and strategies, in order to ensure the inclusive participation and efforts of all stakeholders, including local communities and the private sector.

Tonga joined the international community in endorsing the call-for-action outcome document (resolution 71/312) of the Ocean Conference in June, which includes almost 1,400 voluntary commitments by stakeholders, including eight from Tonga. It is a foundation for the development of a blue economy or "blue charter", as proposed by the Commonwealth secretariat. It is urgent that we begin working to develop practical guidelines and toolkits to assist States in delivering on all the targets under Goal 14 in an integrated manner.

We acknowledge the completion of the work of the Preparatory Committee established by General Assembly resolution 69/292 on the development of a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Tonga maintains its support for the commencement of an intergovernmental conference to initiate negotiations on a substantive text as soon as possible. We embrace the ongoing work of the International Seabed Authority in its administration and management of resources in that area in accordance with the common heritage of mankind. Tonga congratulates the Secretary-General of the Authority in his first year in office as he works with member States to develop important exploitation regulations, which must strike the appropriate balance between conservation of the natural environment in which mineral resources exist and its sustainable use. The consultations must be transparent and inclusive if such a balance is to be achieved.

Tonga continues its engagement as a member State of the Authority and will seek re-election to the Council at the Authority's twenty-fourth session in 2018. A Tongan national, together with other members of the Legal and Technical Commission, provides expert views for facilitating the work of the Commission in developing an important financial mechanism for ensuring the fair and equitable distribution of returns from seabed mining.

Tonga reiterates the call made under the Samoa Pathway for genuine and durable partnerships that can help to ensure that no one is left behind. A very credible partnership mechanism between the 12 Pacific SIDS and Italy, Austria, Luxembourg and Spain is exemplified through the Joint Committee. It has been ably co-chaired by Italy and the Chair of the Pacific SIDS every year since 2006. Tonga has therefore benefited thanks to projects related to renewable energy, water, the strengthening of young Government officials' capacities and, more recently, protected maritime areas.

We welcome the establishment of the India-United Nations Development Fund through the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation, which launched a project implemented by UNDP for establishing early warning systems in Tonga and other Pacific island countries. The system relies on the timely provision of disaster-risk information, guidance on how to act on warnings and ensuring a constant state of preparedness. Sustainable development is possible where there is peace and security, and sustainable development is key to peace and security.

Finally, we urge all leaders to focus and reflect on the best ways to ensure that their power and legitimacy can benefit their own people and the entire world. We appeal for a speedy resolution to the current tensions on the Korean peninsula, which are affecting global peace and security. I congratulate the Secretary-General on the recent establishment of the High-level Advisory Board for Mediation, designed to advise him on specific initiatives and related efforts around the world.

May Almighty God guide and bless the President of the General Assembly, all the States Members of the United Nations and their respective Governments and peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the King of the Kingdom of Tonga for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sogavare (Solomon Islands): I would like to add to those of others the congratulations of my delegation to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. His great experience and wisdom as a diplomat will guide our work going forward in this session. I assure him that for its part, my delegation will try to lighten his burden by providing him with full cooperation throughout the proceedings of the Assembly.

With regard to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, what can I say? Not only was he the first Fijian to hold the office of President of the General Assembly, he was also the first Pacific islander to assume that prestigious office. Among his many achievements was his championing of the 1,350 voluntary commitments made at the Ocean Conference held here in June. I thank him for a marvellous job done.

Our world is going through difficult times. The year 2017 has been dominated by intentional provocations and natural disasters. As such, the choice of our theme — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is not only appropriate, it is perfectly timed. On that note, on behalf of the people of Solomon Islands, I extend our heartfelt sympathies to those affected by the recent natural disasters, in particular Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. We would like to express our sympathies to the families who lost loved ones in the recent earthquakes in Mexico. Whether we are talking about tsunamis, cyclones, flooding or earthquakes, Solomon Islands knows well the pain of having to live through such ordeals. Our hearts and prayers are with the victims.

I believe that the theme can effectively be summed up in three simple yet powerful words — peace, humanity and equality. However, I am afraid that the status quo in the world today does not reflect them. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, approximately 65.6 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced at the end of last year. Those statistics are the result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations — the consequences of human actions. Sadly, the majority of the displaced are women and children. They are the most vulnerable to the evil designs of their fellow human beings. They must therefore be protected. The protection of people is in the DNA of the Organization. My Government therefore reaffirms its support for the responsibility to protect. The international community must continue to stand firm in its fight to prevent crimes against humanity.

I stand here with pride in saying that today we in the Pacific continue to enjoy the world's most peaceful corner. Although we play a minor role in the geopolitics of the world, we are now once again caught up in the midst of a global power play. History shows that global events have often dictated those in the Pacific region. They were events beyond our control that were imposed on us. They have had lasting effects on our peoples, many of them negative. From bygone world wars to nuclear tests, to the current instances of military provocation, we continue to deal with the remnants of those foreign-imposed events.

For us in Solomon Islands, it was only a month ago that we celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of Guadalcanal, a significant battle of the Second World War. For many, that war ended in 1945, but for us its repercussions continue. Between 2011 and 2017, approximately 37,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance, weighing some 152,000 metric tons, were destroyed. I thank the Governments of Australia and the United States of America for their assistance in that exercise, which continues today.

Today, we are also continually threatened by global power posturing attempting once again to dictate our fate as a region. However, we refuse to remain silent. It is on that note that I would like to register our strongest condemnation of the actions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We too would like to echo the global call to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions. The recent testing of ballistic missiles by the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea over the Pacific Ocean is an insult to the people of the Pacific. We are ocean people. The sea is our sanctuary. It is the foundation of our heritage and where our people source their food and income. We therefore denounce any pollution or contamination of the ocean that our Pacific peoples depend on for their livelihoods.

As the Assembly is well aware, we in the Pacific supply approximately 60 per cent of the world's tuna market, underscoring our region's global significance. Maintaining the health of our ocean is therefore not merely in our own interests. The maintenance of our ocean, given its importance to global food security, should be in all of our interests. In that regard, Solomon Islands reaffirms the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the peaceful use of ocean spaces.

While the threat of nuclear warfare is a genuine concern to us all, for our small island developing States the effects of climate change that we are currently witnessing at an alarming rate on our shores present a clear and present danger. The concentration of carbon dioxide in our oceans now stands at 400 parts per million. It has passed the safe level of 350 parts per million and at 550 parts per million will soon begin to dissolve our corals. For Pacific nations like ours, climate change continues to be our enemy. We are constantly invaded by that enemy, every day. In Solomon Islands, we have lost six islands to the effects of climate change. What was once a playground for children is now inundated with water. For many of our peoples, talk of a sustainable world is becoming increasingly unattainable. We are in survival mode.

The horrors of the impact of a nuclear attack are undeniable, but the slow onset of tragedy caused by the adverse impact of climate change is just as cruel. If it has not happened yet, it will shortly. An unstable climate and people's subsequent displacement and relocation can exacerbate some of the core drivers of conflict, such as migratory pressures, the clash of cultures and competition for resources. Those are threats to humankind's very existence and could very well morph into threats to global peace and security. That is why the Pacific small island developing States have been requesting that the Security Council also address the issue of climate change.

While useful, the building of sea walls and wave-breakers to mitigate some of the effects of climate change is a mere Band-Aid solution. We call on all major greenhouse-gas emitters to meet their national determined contributions for reducing emissions. We strongly urge the United States of America to reconsider its position on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Let us all stand together in solidarity to face the defining challenges of our time. With regard to the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, Solomon Islands pledges its full support to Fiji as Chair. As a fellow Pacific island country, we congratulate Fiji on its upcoming assumption of the chairship and look forward to discussions on effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Regarding peace and security, Solomon Islands has contributed a contingent of five police officers who have just completed their 12-month tour of duty in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, in our first humble contribution to the maintenance of world peace. Another eight police officers, two of whom are women, are all set to go as soon as they secure their visas for the Sudan. The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur was set up to protect civilians in areas where militia groups continue to be active and intercommunal violence still occurs. The efforts could be made more effective if the United Nations Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes could be integrated into predeployment and in-theatre training for all peacekeepers.

The mandate of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands ended on 30 June. On behalf of the people of Solomon Islands, I would like to sincerely thank members of the Pacific Islands Forum for coming to our aid to save us from ourselves. At this juncture, I would like to pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Mission and to thank their families for their loved ones' services. I am also deeply grateful to Australia and New Zealand for their excellent leadership role in the Assistance Mission, which was premised on a regional security framework, the Biketawa Declaration. My Government is also very supportive of the Pacific islands leaders' communiqué from the forty-eighth Forum meeting, which calls for a comprehensive expansion and updating of the Declaration. We believe that a Biketawa-plus that takes into consideration the security challenges the region faces today, as well as our collective responses to them, will help to keeping the Pacific islands region peaceful.

Like other post-conflict countries, Solomon Islands will continue to face many challenges.

Sustainable peace will require more than just effective policing or a functioning public service. It will require social and economic development initiatives that address the underlying causes of the conflict. In that regard, I must thank the Peacebuilding Commission for facilitating our national dialogue on peace and sustainable development. The communiqué from that dialogue shows an inclusive and clear consensus on our priorities for sustaining peace. I therefore look forward to Solomon Islands being formally declared eligible for peacebuilding support from the Peacebuilding Recovery Facility.

I must also thank the Board of the Green Climate Fund for approving $86 million for the Tina River Hydro Project when it met in South Korea early this year. The project will create more than 200 jobs and offset more than 44,000 tons of carbon dioxide per annum in diesel emissions. It will also provide renewable energy, at a more affordable cost, to more than 100,000 people in and around our capital city of Honiara.

I currently have an issue with the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the joint submission by Papua New Guinea, the Federated States of Micronesia and Solomon Islands concerning the Ontong Java plateau. Solomon Islands notes with serious concern that the Commission, in its deliberations, has overturned the understanding that we had reached with the Sub-Commission on the connection of Duff and Anuta Islands to the continental margin of the Ontong Java plateau. The Sub-Commission and our joint delegation reached mutually acceptable conclusions that were the result of comprehensive interactions over two years. However, we were not given the opportunity to address the amendments proposed by the Commission, despite their serious implications for our submission, nor were we given the reasons for the amendments despite our repeated requests. We therefore have no option but to consider making a revised submission.

A related issue is the negotiations on an implementing agreement under the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdictions. The current negotiations undermine the fundamental principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and are grossly inadequate when addressing the principle of adjacency, the integration of traditional knowledge, and transboundary and cumulative impacts as they relate to small island developing States. There must also be some recognition for a funding mechanism that can adequately support the implementation of the proposed instrument.

The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations speaks powerfully of our mission to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. This language clearly articulates the principle of universality for all peoples and nations, regardless of their size or population.

However, as we in the Assembly speak of leaving no one behind, we are at the same time shutting the door for the people of Taiwan in participating in this universal process. We are thereby contradicting our own principles by leaving 23 million people behind. And yet the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires global partnership and the joint efforts of all stakeholders to mobilize all available resources. Taiwan is ready, willing and able to engage in and contribute to the wide range of substantive United Nations programmes for the welfare of humankind. If we are to focus on people and promote peace and sustainability, let us give Taiwan and its 23 million people a chance.

Let us not contradict the principles that the United Nations was established to represent and allow the rules to change based on whose best interests are at stake. Taiwan has been actively involved in United Nations programmes and specialized agencies. Despite its contributions to the well-being of the citizens of the world, we continue to ignore Taiwan's right to self-determination; as such, it is high time that the Assembly gave due recognition to Taiwan as a legitimate member of the family of nations.

Article 73 of our Charter also speaks powerfully on fundamental human rights. In the 1960 Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, the General Assembly stated:

> "The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and cooperation" (*resolution 1514 (XV), para. 1*).

Thanks to that Article, the people of New Caledonia will hold a referendum in 2018 whereby they can finally decide, without fear or favour, on their political future.

I wish them all the best. I must thank and commend the administering Power for working closely with the Special Committee on Decolonization (Committee of 24) on the issue of New Caledonia. I hope that the same level of cooperation will also be shown on French Polynesia and that a visit by the Committee of 24 will occur soon.

The position of Solomon Islands on the issues I have mentioned is premised on principles that we have consistently upheld. In this connection, Solomon Islands condemns the consistent human rights violations in West Papua. Our Sustainable Development Goals, which promote the notion of no one being left behind, will be empty promises unless we in the United Nations take active steps to address the plight of the peoples of West Papua. Indeed, we left them behind some 50 years ago when, as a family of nations, we noted their plight without adding much. Since then, the peoples of West Papua have never been allowed the proper act of self-determination guaranteed by the inalienable right to self-determination, as expressed in United Nations human rights covenants.

Only the international action of individual countries and the leading organizational bodies of the international system, especially the General Assembly, can pave the way for the recognition of a people whose right to self-determination has been denied for nearly 50 years. Failing that, we as a family of nations will become complicit in perpetuating suffering and being blind to injustice, missing yet another golden opportunity to remain true to the idea of leaving no one behind. At the seventy-first session, a group of Pacific Island nations called for the General Assembly to address the human rights violations in West Papua. Today, I stand before the Assembly on behalf of my people and those of the Pacific region to reiterate that same call to address the plight of West Papuan women, children and men.

Our people are watching. West Papuans in West Papua are watching, praying and hoping for a brighter future. They have come in numbers to express their hope for a better future. We as leaders have the responsibility to leave no one behind. I would therefore encourage Indonesia to engage in more constructive dialogue, including with West Papua, to find a way forward in addressing the aspirations of the people of West Papua. I urge the United Nations to proactively engage in those dialogues as well.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights worldwide, my country and region included. Violence against women is an obstacle to gender equality, economic opportunities and livelihoods. The final *Pacific Regional Millennium Development Goals Tracking Report*, published in 2015, highlighted the fact that violence against women was an impediment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. If our region is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we will have to intensify efforts and increase support and cooperation to end violence against women and girls.

The Solomon Islands Family Protection Act of 2014 was a national response to the urgent need to curtail the increasing rate of domestic violence. It was aimed at ensuring that homes in Solomon Islands, as important units of the community, are peaceful and safe for all members of a family. The Act covers any type of abuse that happens in the home between perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. Yes, we have made big strides in not just counting women, but more importantly, in making women count.

As a small island developing State and least developed country with inherent structural capacity constraints, we greatly rely on the United Nations system to support and augment our national efforts in implementing national development programmes. It is our hope that this expectation will be met by concrete and measurable deliverables on the ground by our United Nations partners.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's reform agenda and applauds his vision for repositioning sustainable development at the heart of the United Nations. Its guiding framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its pledge to leave no one behind, is indeed our boldest agenda for humankind. For my country, it will have to include fair representation in the recruitment of staff to the United Nations Secretariat. Despite having only one national at the Secretariat, we have not been invited to sit the young professionals' exams for two years in a row now. We nevertheless remain steadfast in our support and encouragement of action for a strong and effective United Nations, and we stand ready to support the Secretary-General's noble efforts to transform the Organization, including the Security Council.

The United Nations is still the town hall of our global village. People know what it does but do not

see much value in it. It is inevitably imperfect. As the Organization's second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, famously said, "The United Nations was not created to take humanity to heaven, but to save it from hell". The Organization's imperfections, however, only mean that we need to work harder to make it better. So let us do that.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Zoran Zaev, President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Zoran Zaev, President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Zoran Zaev, President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Zaev (Macedonia) (*spoke in Macedonian, English text provided by the delegation*): It is an honour for me to address the Assembly and to share the Republic of Macedonia's positions on the most important issues on the United Nations agenda. I firmly believe that we share the common goal of world peace. I also believe that we share the same commitments to a decent life for all in a sustainable environment and, further, that we will find common solutions to our common challenges. Peace, commitment to a decent life, and joint solutions are the values that the Republic of Macedonia has relied on in overcoming a deep political crisis that had repercussions throughout our region.

We are a small, diverse countryy. We have managed to overcome difficult challenges because we have united around common values. That is why today the Republic of Macedonia is again free, secure and stable. It is a friend to all its neighbours and is firmly oriented towards full integration into NATO and the European Union.

(*spoke in English*)

As Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Macedonia, I want to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák of the Slovak Republic on his election to the prestigious position of President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would also like to express our full support to Secretary-General Guterres. We wish him great success in carrying out his comprehensive, ambitious and much-needed agenda to transform and adapt the United Nations to enable it to meet its demanding tasks and our common challenges, both existing and emerging.

The United Nations must continue to do more and better to meet those challenges and stand the test of time. We must be vigilant and constant, but also seek to develop innovative and adaptable conflict prevention, sustainable development and management reform mechanisms, while building on the foundations enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and other core documents.

The world is plagued by severe humanitarian crises, new and protracted old conflicts, the intensification of terrorist attacks and violent extremism, human rights abuses and increasing climate-change effects. Different in scope and weight, those challenges have become more complex. They require a wide-ranging response. While we have been able to mitigate the consequences for some, others remain unabated. Just a few weeks ago, we witnessed devastating natural disasters in the Gulf of Mexico and South Asia. That is a harsh reminder that our planet is changing, and we all have an obligation to do our best to mitigate and hopefully reverse the consequences. We can progress if we are united.

The promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law must remain at the core of our action. Despite the fact that the United Nations has a robust human rights architecture, the current blatant human rights violations, widespread impunity and lack of accountability around the globe remind us that there is much to be done.

Monstrous terrorist attacks have increased in number. Our actions must focus on preventing violent extremism and radicalization, as they are major factors for terrorist recruitment. The establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, in which one of the priority areas is prevention, was a welcome step. For our part, we are also working on a national strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and

radicalization. I am aware that there are differing approaches to those crucial issues, as we have divergent views among us. However, I would like to urge the international community not to focus on its differences, but rather on its primary responsibility to act robustly for the common good.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery continues to jeopardize global security. The implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) is key to minimizing the possible disastrous consequences for the generations to come. In that regard, let me underline that we are deeply alarmed by the continued unilateral actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has been conducting nuclear tests and missile launches despite the repeated calls of the international community to fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We believe that the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is possible, and we therefore urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately abandon its nuclear and missile programmes and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Let me comment briefly on the main theme of the current session of the General Assembly, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". States must remain focused on the implementation of the new sustainable development agenda that we agreed on at the seventieth anniversary of our Organization. That remarkable undertaking laid the foundations for the future development framework. That had implications for many other important areas of common concern.

Many vital issues affecting global prosperity are related to the implementation of that agenda. It is therefore important to continue to encourage and build new avenues of cooperation and new partnerships among us. That is central to the integration of the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. Those are the fundamentals for development and a hopeful future, as well as for our peace, stability and security. At the national level, our efforts to transform agreed goals into practice are included in the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework programme, the 2016-2020 United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Here I would like to mention to last year's important summit on the issue of large-scale movements of refugees and migrants. That is a global phenomenon with various causes and diverse implications. The United Nations adopted a comprehensive political declaration and pledged to intensify international cooperation, in particular among countries of origin or nationality, transit and destination.

The Republic of Macedonia supports and is participating in the ongoing consultation processes on the two compacts dealing with refugees and migrants. We expect an outcome that will address all aspects of these global phenomena. Let me remind everyone that in the past couple of years, hundreds of thousands of migrants have transited through my country and the region. Even though that presented complex challenges, we managed to provide humanitarian assistance to the people in need. Since we have to adapt globally, we must also do our homework and act as responsible Governments in order to secure and provide a better future and prosperity for our people.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia affirms its dedication to fundamental democratic values, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. We overcame a deep political and institutional crisis through our resolute stand in defence of those fundamentals. Our understanding is that democracy must be driven by civic engagement from the bottom up. Societies are better off when decision-making is comprehensive, inclusive and transparent. Public policies must work for citizens' well-being.

My Government has laid out an ambitious reform plan with short-, medium- and long-term measures. Our goal is to restore democracy, build professional and independent institutions and improve the standard of living for every citizen, and to expedite the integration of the Republic of Macedonia into the European Union and NATO.

From the depths of a political crisis we have emerged stronger, and we have been able to contribute to regional stability and cooperation. Those who know Balkan history know that our region has not always been seen in a positive light. I strongly believe that we have a new chance to make a change, not just in perceptions but in substance. Over the past few months, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia has strongly promoted a new approach to its neighbours. We have demonstrated the capacity to overcome open issues. We have articulated our national interests and acted in pursuit of them. At the same time, we have been fully aware and respectful of the national interests of our neighbours.

Our policy is based on solving issues through dialogue and cooperation. We hope that that approach will inspire others and stimulate a new approach to bilateral relations in our region. As a positive step forward, let me underscore our signing of a bilateral agreement on friendship, good-neighbourliness and cooperation with Bulgaria. That represents a joint success for the two countries.

This session of the General Assembly represents the twenty-fifth year of our participation as an independent State. Next year, we will mark a quarter-century of our United Nations membership. However, that anniversary is also marked by the dispute over how my country should be referred to, which has unilateral consequences on our development and perspectives.

The Interim Accord of 1995 laid the foundations for a normalization of relations between Macedonia and Greece. At present, the two countries are implementing confidence-building measures, and that is a very positive development. We have a fresh impetus to overcome the long-standing bilateral dispute. I would say that we have both made certain mistakes at various times, but the main goal now is to resolve the issue and close it.

I firmly believe that we must seize the momentum, conduct discussions in good faith and resolve the issue for our shared future. We greatly value the continuing efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Matthew Nimetz, and the good offices that he provides to that end. I firmly believe that there is a way to overcome the problem that Greece has with our constitutional name. For a change, let us try to approach it from a positive point of view.

Maintaining good neighbourly and friendly relations is a two-way street. We are committed to doing our job and expect the same of our neighbours. That message has already been clearly sent to our friends and partners. I would like to reaffirm it here, from the rostrum, where all of us have been recalling the purposes and principals of the Charter of the United Nations. The world can be a very noisy place, but the most important things can be very quiet. I believe that if we listen to our peoples, we can hear the world.

In conclusion, I want to underline that the Republic of Macedonia remains a staunch supporter of multilateralism. We will continue to work with the United Nations and all Member States on jointly reinforcing world peace and security, promoting human rights, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and dealing with all the other issues that are crucial for the people we represent.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Zoran Zaev, President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Desalegn (Ethiopia): I would like to join other delegations in congratulating the President on his election to preside over the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and I wish to assure him of the support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of his responsibilities through the course of the session. Let me also take this opportunity to express appreciation to his predecessor, who effectively guided the work of the General Assembly at its previous session.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. António Guterres as the new Secretary-General and support his call for a surge in diplomacy for peace in addressing the many crisis situations that the world is facing today. Let me stress here we are behind the Secretary-General in his efforts to reform the Organization in the three interrelated areas of development, peace and security, and management.

It has been indeed a great pleasure and honour for Ethiopia to preside over the work of the Security Council during this important month, when world leaders gather in New York for the new session of the

General Assembly to discuss issues of global peace, security and development. We would like to express our gratitude to all the delegations that participated in the high-level open debate of the Security Council on Wednesday, 20 September, on the reform of United Nations peacekeeping operations (see S/PV.8051). As a leading troop-contributing country, Ethiopia attaches great importance to strengthening the role of United Nations peacekeeping in addressing challenges to international peace and security.

In that regard, we welcome the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2378 (2017), which we introduced on Wednesday, and we thank all delegations that sponsored the resolution, which reaffirms the central role of United Nations peacekeeping as one of the most effective tools available to the world in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security.

That the world is facing unprecedented challenges to its peace and prosperity has been all too apparent for quite some time now. Geopolitical tensions reminiscent of the Cold War are increasing. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is posing a real threat to global peace and security. Terrorism and violent extremism continue to wreak havoc across various parts of the world. Global income inequality is no longer just a development challenge; it is also a security threat. Climate change is not a fiction but real, and we are witnessing its devastating consequences for humankind and the planet. Countries such as my own continue to face that horrendous challenge to their development.

Three major peace and security reviews were conducted only two years ago, providing valuable recommendations, which, if implemented, could help the United Nations keep pace with the changing global security dynamics and respond effectively to new and emerging peace and security challenges in a comprehensive, systematic and coordinated manner. The clear conclusion of the three major reviews was that the primary United Nations approach to resolving conflicts should be a political one. Indeed, the many conflict and crisis situations around the world cannot be resolved other than through political means. That holds true not only for the crisis in South Sudan, close to my country, but also for the conflicts that are raging in the Middle East, including in Syria and Yemen, as well as the dangerous situation on the Korean peninsula. It is therefore only by reaffirming our commitments to the letter and spirit of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, on the pacific settlement of disputes, that we can effectively respond to the global peace and security challenges we are facing today.

However, that is obviously easier said than done. That is because without the political will and commitment of the conflicting parties to finding a political solution through dialogue and negotiation, peace is bound to elude us. A common purpose and resolve on the part of all external actors involved in the search for a political solution to conflict and crisis situations are also absolutely vital. What current global security requires is a stronger and more effective global and regional partnership in the service of conflict prevention and peace. What we have repeatedly seen is that in the absence of that partnership, which must be underpinned by the principles of complementarity and coherence, no meaningful progress can be achieved. The United Nations should be able to play a leading role in forging those kinds of partnerships and in sharing the burden in accordance with the Charter.

The links connecting peace, security and development have long been recognized, and that was also the other clear key message emanating from the three major peace and security reviews. More peaceful and inclusive societies generate an environment conducive to sustainable development, and sustainable peace is both an enabler and an outcome of sustainable development. The year 2015 was indeed seminal in that regard. The commitment that we made in this Hall to the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to inclusiveness, leaving no one behind, was the result of our shared conviction that our fates and futures are linked and that poverty is a shared challenge. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were further reinforced by the adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which entered into force last November, thereby strengthening the global response to the threats posed by that phenomenon.

Today, however, it is no longer the time to celebrate those achievements; we need rather to reflect where we are in terms of their implementation. Though the SDGs were endorsed by all with much optimism, the current state of affairs is far from reassuring. The global situation since their adoption has not been conducive to ensuring their reasonably effective implementation. That is a major disappointment for all those who have been hoping to see renewed global partnership in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda.

For our part, we have fully embraced and begun to record encouraging initial results in implementing the 2030 Agenda. We have continued to invest in our people so as to improve their well-being. In order to achieve structural transformation and diversify our economy, the Government is expanding our manufacturing sector and infrastructure facilities, which have continued to attract an increasing amount of domestic and foreign investments. In order to finance our ambitious national projects, we are mobilizing domestic resources while maximizing the positive impacts of foreign assistance. By implementing integrated, pro-poor policies, we have been reducing poverty and enhancing the quality of life, and we have sustained our rapid and inclusive economic growth.

Ethiopia is therefore projected to be the fastest growing economy in the world by the end of 2017. That should, of course, not be a source of complacency; it should rather drive us further to redouble our determination and endeavours to accelerate the full implementation of our current national development policy, which integrates the SDGs, and we will remain fully committed to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, to responding to the legitimate development demands of our people and to addressing our multifaceted development challenges. That is not easy, nor are our challenges uncomplicated, most particularly those related to natural phenomena.

We in Ethiopia, like many other countries, are dealing almost every day with the adverse effects of climate change. Now is not the time, therefore, to doubt their devastating impact, while millions of our fellow humans are losing their lives and their hard-won development achievements. That is happening all over the world. It is high time to act urgently and decisively to combat the adverse impacts of climate change, particularly its disproportionately bad effect on the most vulnerable countries, which, as has been repeatedly pointed out, bear almost no responsibility for causing climate change.

Climate change, not just poverty, is our major challenge. The current climate-induced drought is affecting millions of people. For the third consecutive year, after successfully dealing with the El Niño-induced drought in 2015, Ethiopia is confronting the adverse effects of climate change. That is why I said earlier that climate change is real and poses a clear danger for humankind, because it undermines development gains. We are doing everything that we can to mitigate its negative effects, with the continuing and much appreciated support of our bilateral and multilateral partners. While we are committed to addressing our current humanitarian emergency, we will also continue to implement our national strategy to build a green and resilient economy.

Countries such as Ethiopia that are fully committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Agenda require an international environment that can help them succeed in their fight against poverty. Ending poverty, achieving prosperity for all and preserving our planet are attainable goals. We know that we have the resources and the capabilities to achieve a world free from poverty. We have begun implementing the SDGs, albeit unevenly, but time is of the essence. We must accelerate the process if we are to leave no one behind. That has enormous meaning for peace, security and prosperity as well. Poverty and economies that fail to produce employment opportunities are not fertile ground for peace to grow in and be nurtured.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Martí Petit (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan. Spanish text provided by the delegation*): I would like to begin by congratulating the President, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, on his choice of theme for the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. The link between peace and a dignified life is, without a doubt, one of the key issues of our time — as is sustainable development,

which has become the principal challenge facing the international community. The priorities set forth by the President and the theme for the current session highlight the close link between peace, a dignified life and a sustainable planet.

The choice of those priorities and theme are in keeping with what we have been building together over the years, as reflected in the aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which we agreed on two years ago, and are also based on the actions of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, during his first nine months at the helm of the United Nations.

Next year will mark 70 years since the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first major joint success of the United Nations. Throughout those seven decades, we have learned that the goals shared by all of humankind are interrelated. The United Nations was founded with the fundamental aim of preventing conflicts and ensuring peace. Over the centuries, all our parliaments and assemblies have been established on the basis of that goal, namely, to peacefully resolve conflicts and make decisions that affect us all together. This parliament, an assembly of all the countries of the world, was also founded on that very desire.

Soon afterwards, the original objective of maintaining peace and security was joined by those of promoting human rights and, subsequently, by the economic and social development of nations and their citizens. That in itself was because the international community became aware of the strong relationship between development opportunities and the prevention of conflict. A fairer world with fewer inequalities, with opportunities for all and respect for our differences, will tend to be a safer and more peaceful world.

It was several decades ago that the United Nations turned its focus towards another major objective, namely, sustainability, caring for the environment and, more specifically, the fight against climate change. In June we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Its four objectives — peace, human rights, development and sustainability — continue to be priorities. All four are tightly interconnected, and all four require a multilateral approach, since no country, no matter how powerful, can guarantee peace and security alone.

No country or group of countries can implement development policies alone, and no country can fight climate change alone. We must therefore continue to uphold inclusive multilateralism. It is not enough to simply work together to resolve issues that affect us all — the solutions we agree on should leave no one behind. They must be fair and inclusive, and we must make sure that they benefit us all.

It is in that spirit that Andorra has become a member of the Economic and Social Council for 2017 to 2019, because it is in that Council that inclusive multilateralism is truly significant. The Economic and Social Council is the clearest manifestation that the United Nations not only strives to be an assembly of the world's countries but also wants to have a direct impact on the lives of citizens all over the world. If, as the Secretary-General stated, development is the key to conflict prevention, the Economic and Social Council is a key tool for that.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also plays a key role. For that reason, Andorra will participate in the next round of voluntary national reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals, which will evaluate our implementation of the 2030 Agenda and accelerate its effective application.

Everyone here knows that we live in a world of constant assessment. Rating agencies measure the solvency of our countries, the World Trade Organization analyses the level of openness and interdependence of our economies and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development ensures transparency and healthy fiscal competition between States. Never before have we experienced the evaluative capacity of various international agencies and bodies so intensely, especially in the economic and financial sphere.

That is a positive thing, but it will not be if we limit those evaluations to the economic and financial sphere. We must be equally demanding in the social sphere — although economic progress does indeed play a very important role in constructing a fairer and safer world. The promotion of a decent life and social development are also essential elements. That is what the voluntary national reviews are — a means of measuring all we are doing to attain the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. Andorra will submit its voluntary report next July. The various ministries and departments of the Andorran Government have, in fact, been working for some time to align our internal

policies with the 2030 Agenda and ensure that our internal actions comply with each of the 17 Goals to which we all committed on 25 September 2015.

From a social perspective, the work that Andorra has done over the past year to develop a white paper on equality as a basis for cross-cutting actions to foster inclusion in both the public and the private sectors is a clear example. When I say that Andorra is developing this white paper, I mean the country as a whole, not just the Government. Of course, the Government and Parliament must act as initiators and leaders, but they do so with the full participation of civil society. The white paper will lead to a law on equality, which should be the key tool in our effort to eradicate the discrimination that still persists in our society.

All that work is clearly aligned with Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 10 on reducing inequalities within and among countries. Inclusive multilateralism, which I mentioned a few moments ago, should not only prevail in the General Assembly but should also guide our internal policies. At the national level, we need to involve the largest possible number of actors and find solutions that work for everyone.

There are also other examples of Andorra's efforts in the context of domestic policy, such as in the area of education, which is directly linked to Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, we are working to introduce competency-based education; to continue and improve the coexistence of our three educational systems — in Spanish, French and Andorran — all of which are public, free of charge and open to all; and to incorporate human rights and democratic values in our curriculums for children and young people. All three of those efforts are also in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, and in some instances are inspired by them. A good example of our commitment to international educational standards is the Government's recent adoption of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, a key international instrument for promoting equal opportunity.

While the relationship between peace, human rights, security and inclusive development is clear and undeniable, it is also increasingly obvious that combating climate change is a crucial pillar of that edifice. That is because the destruction of ecosystems and the natural disasters linked to climate change directly and cruelly affect the most vulnerable people; because a scarcity of natural resources is at the heart of many current conflicts; because the new paradigm of sustainability drastically changes our previous notion of economic and social development; and because — and pardon me for mentioning the obvious — if we destroy the planet, there will be no sense in talking about peace, security or development. Fighting climate change will therefore continue to take up much of the debate now and in the future on international actions and initiatives. That is why seven of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are directly related to environmental issues. It is key that much of the our Governments' domestic efforts should address that issue.

In recent times, Andorra has become very aware of the relevance of fighting climate change, and we have demonstrated that through actions. Thanks to an ambitious aid programme, Andorra has one of the world's most significant growth rates per inhabitant for electric automobiles and numbers of points for charging electric vehicles. Given that heating buildings is one of our biggest sources of greenhouse-gas emissions, we are investing substantially in network projects that centralize heat generation, making it more efficient and less polluting. We are also implementing a policy of incentives and obligations to promote citizens' own production of renewable solar and geothermal energy. Lastly, we are drafting a law on energy transition that will make all such policies mandatory.

As most members of the international community stated in December 2015, we do not want this effort to remain merely pious words or a catalogue of good intentions that will not be translated into concrete action. We therefore welcome the initiative of Mr. Emmanuel Macron, the President of our partner country, France, to promote a global compact for the environment, which will collect and harmonize all of the agreements signed and implemented since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 through to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change — because it is important that all global action to protect the environment and fight climate change be reflected in specific rights and obligations for States and individuals. Andorra heartily welcomes the work that has been done so far for the global compact, which includes, as a substantive right for individuals, the right to a sound and healthy environment. Here, our 1993 Constitution was a bellwether, as it includes the right to a clean environment as a citizens' right and, therefore, a duty for the public authorities.

The various international conventions aimed at protecting the environment must be reflected in specific actions that will have tangible effects for people, because the negative effects of climate change and global warming have been apparent for some time and are having a very negative effect on the planet and its inhabitants. I have in mind especially the concerns we have about the Pacific islands, which are threatened by a rise in sea levels, the fragile ecosystems of mountainous countries such as Andorra, and the extraordinary, devastating force of the hurricanes that have been hitting the Caribbean region recently.

More than ever before, we need inclusive multilateralism that will leave no one behind. But we also need effective multilateralism that works, offers concrete results and responds to people's problems. Work to that end begins here at United Nations Headquarters, which must adjust the Organization to the needs of both countries and their citizens. The first mission of any organization, from private companies to Governments, is an internal one — ensuring that its members and structures are aligned with its final objectives and that they are well prepared to respond to various needs. We therefore welcome the fact that one of the first steps taken by Secretary-General Guterres was on his project to reform the United Nations development system.

If we really believe that peace, human rights, development and sustainability are closely interrelated, we would logically expect the various bodies and committees dealing with such issues to work together in a coordinated manner, just as it is logical and necessary for specific problems to be managed by specific departments. Proof of the fact that the Secretary-General is doing a good job is his decision to establish a United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism headed by an Under-Secretary-General.

The importance of fighting terrorism has been trumpeted everywhere in recent years. We Andorrans have seen our European neighbours suffer directly from the consequences of such irrational hatred. In Spain last month, Barcelona and Cambrils, two Catalan towns that are close to Andorra, suffered from the problem.

Peace and security have more complex dimensions today than they did 70 years ago. In the mid-twentieth century, after two world wars, the maintenance of peace and security could be addressed and resolved here in the Assembly through frank dialogue and effective cooperation and among countries. Bilateral diplomacy also played a significant role. Today, with the global threat of terrorism, while diplomacy between States continues to be very important in settling issues of peace and security, they also require concrete action for combating terrorism and eradicating its root causes. The Secretary-General can therefore count on Andorra's support for his establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other measures designed to improve the functioning of the Organization and provide the effective answers that citizens of the world expect from all of us.

The question of the effectiveness of the United Nations is important not only for the Secretary-General but also clearly for all of us States Members of the Organization. It is all of us who must work to ensure that global agreements, starting with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, are truly binding, to assess with transparency various countries' compliance with those agreements and to avoid the possibility that the United Nations and the international community could become paralysed or inactive in the face of the great challenges and major crises of our times.

It is for those reasons that Andorra has supported, and will continue to support, the Rome Statute and the Kampala Amendments, which make it possible for the International Criminal Court to exercise its jurisdiction in cases of crimes of aggression that clearly violate the Charter of the United Nations. Allowing the Court to act ex officio in the most serious cases without the need for referrals by the Security Council would be a meaningful step forward for the rule of law at the international level.

For the same reason, Andorra will continue to support initiatives that seek to limit the right of the veto for the permanent members of the Security Council in cases of genocide or serious human rights violations. In our opinion, the political declaration adopted two years ago on the initiative of the French Republic and the United Mexican States, which provides for the suspension of the veto in cases involving mass atrocities, is a good course of action to follow.

No one should be surprised by the fact that Andorrans are faithful defenders of the multilateral order. Like other small countries, we firmly believe that the major challenges of our time must be addressed globally, and that what the various countries of the world can do for themselves amounts to very little

without global and concerted action. That is why much of our foreign policy is focused on multilateral forums, as we showed four years ago during the Andorran presidency of the Council of Europe. Evidence for that will also be seen next month, when Andorra hosts the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and from our candidacy to organize the Ibero-American Summit in 2020.

The Ibero-American community is in mourning today for the victims of the earthquake that took place in Mexico last Tuesday. The Government and the Mexican people know that they can count on the sympathy and solidarity of the Principality of Andorra.

As I have said, our dedication to the purposes and principles of the United Nations is clear and firm. Secretary-General António Guterres can rely on Andorra to help build a sustainable, safe and fair world that involves everyone, with no one left behind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Antoni Martí Petit, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Hassan Ali Khayre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Mr. Hassan Ali Khayre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hassan Ali Khayre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Khayre (Somalia): It is an honour to address the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I bring warm greetings and good wishes from our President, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, and the entire Government and the people of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Allow me first to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his assumption of his post and his capable work in steering this organ towards a successful session. Yesterday we observed the International Day of Peace, a day that calls for togetherness and solidarity with those who have been forced to flee their homes and those who leave home to seek a better life. The theme of this year's General Assembly session speaks of peace and a decent life on a sustainable planet. The similarity in focus goes beyond coincidence to acknowledge that the pursuit of peace, a decent life, respect, safety and dignity is a global need. Yet it is elusive for hundreds of millions of people in the world today. From Syria to the Central African Republic, from the Rohingya people of Myanmar to the people of Libya, the number of protracted and new conflicts remains unacceptably high.

The Somali people have for many years been the victims of war, famine and poverty, which has seen some of them displaced internally, while others made the perilous journey abroad. We are therefore all too familiar with the need for others to open their doors to distraught and disillusioned people who, just like us, are seeking a safe and dignified life. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who, even in challenging times, continue to uphold that spirit of oneness, sharing and caring.

Somalia is rising, and we are determined to stay the course. Our aim is to contribute positively to the progress of our region, our continent and the world. Despite the enormous challenges, we are, among other things, improving security, re-establishing law and order and conducting the necessary political and socioeconomic reforms. The progress we have achieved so far is the result of our people's embrace of a new dawn and our steadfast partners' willingness to continue supporting us on our journey towards peace and prosperity.

We will continue to formulate measures to strengthen Somalia's progress, including in revenue generation. However, we are dealing with some serious challenges beyond the control of the Somali Government. Debt relief would have the effect of unlocking concessional financing, attracting foreign investment and providing an opportunity that is critical to sustaining our reform efforts, and consequently reinvigorating our economy. We are already working with international financial institutions towards that objective and, through this forum, seek the support of the international community.

Terrorism remains one of our pressing challenges. Its repercussions are felt around the globe. Our unity in addressing this scourge, both collectively and sustainably, is therefore critical. No effort should be spared to neutralize the growth and influence of international terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and Al-Qaida, which, as we know, are key influencers of localized terrorism. Efforts to step up military interventions against such groups should be redoubled. We in Somalia have made significant strides that have weakened the capability of Al-Shabaab.

In that regard, I would like to thank those participating in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for their sacrifice, unfailing support, dedication and solidarity in the fight against Al-Shabaab. In order to ensure that such gains are sustainable, we are focused on strengthening the military capacity of our national security forces. However, the arms embargo imposed on Somalia severely limits our ability to achieve that objective. The Federal Government of Somalia will continue to work with the Security Council and relevant actors on our road map to get it lifted.

Poverty and a lack of education and livelihood opportunities continue to contribute to the growth of violent extremism. Across the world, disillusioned young people are at a heightened risk of exploitation by criminal networks, including terrorists. The need to invest in education, skill-building and livelihood opportunities for our youth is urgent. Addressing those key strategic elements in order to counter terrorism is an enormous task that requires a holistic approach and resources to match. We continue to call on friends of Somalia to help us in such an important undertaking.

We cannot talk about a sustainable planet without demonstrating a commitment to making the world livable for ourselves and future generations. Somalia is one of the countries that have been ravaged by a vicious cycle of man-made and natural disasters directly created by environmental degradation. Scarce rains lead to crop failure and the death of livestock, which subsequently lead to drought and famine. Currently, the humanitarian situation of millions of Somalis remains fragile, as the bite of the current drought, which still threatens to develop into famine, continues. Our national development plan outlines a clear and realistic road map towards breaking that vicious cycle. However, Somalia and many other countries that are on the receiving end of climate change have been unable to come up with the resources required to tackle this ever-growing problem. In that regard, we urge all Member States to continue improving the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which has the potential to mitigate the issue's effects. Similarly, developing countries like Somalia need investment in long-term initiatives, including infrastructure development, water conservation, innovative food and livestock production and the creation of livelihood opportunities.

We must get better at streamlining global development and aid structures, especially for fragile States. We must revisit the prevailing paradigms and take bold and innovative steps to improve that architecture. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, adopted in South Korea in 2011, was certainly a great step in that direction. Somalia fully embraced the New Deal. Yet even with all of its strengths, the New Deal needs improvement. That said, the principles of mutual accountability that are embedded in the framework are exactly what fragile countries like Somalia need. It often happens that pledges are made, only to be later neglected. That should not be the case, because fragile countries rely on such support to rebuild their States. Conversely, development partners are often frustrated with fragile countries' weak transparency and accountability institutions. That is a legitimate concern. As fragile nations, we must do better by tackling corruption and plugging leaks. Somalia recently took bold steps to address corruption. Our anti-corruption bill, which is critical for putting in place measures for good governance and accountability, has been approved by my Cabinet and introduced for enactment by Parliament. The leadership of my country has also reiterated its zero-tolerance policy on corruption.

Also related to funding, we must find predictable financing for non-United Nations peacekeeping missions. That is particularly true for AMISOM. AMISOM has registered tremendous success for more than a decade, and yet each year it continues to operate with uncertainty about its funding. We believe that investment in peacekeeping is a worthy investment in peacebuilding and State-building. We have seen the dividends of such investment in Somalia. I look forward to engaging with our partners on that matter in the coming weeks and months.

A fundamental element of peacebuilding and State-building is how any country treats its marginalized and voiceless citizens. Women are crucial

in decision-making and represent an investment in society. In spite of our many challenges, Somalia has made significant steps in that regard. During the 2016 election, the number of women in Parliament increased from 14 to 24 per cent of the total. Although we missed our target of 30 per cent, we have improved markedly from a few years ago.

Six months ago, when I was forming my Council of Ministers, I appointed six women to my Cabinet. They hold some of the most important portfolios in our nation, including in trade and industry, health, youth and sports, women and human rights and humanitarian affairs. Women have played an instrumental role in Somalia during our worst times. In addition to being mothers, wives and sisters, they dominate the informal economy. Many living as refugees and migrants remain the lifeline of their families through remittances sent to Somalia.

Similarly, young people are vital to peacebuilding and State-building. The number of youths in our Parliament has increased exponentially. I have also appointed a number of very young people to key Cabinet positions. Tragically, one of them, Mr. Abbas Siraji, was killed in May. He was a beacon of hope for Somalia's young people. Having grown up in Kenya, in the world's largest refugee camp, he worked hard, studied and worked for various United Nations agencies. I appointed him Minister of Public Works and Reconstruction when he was 31. Although he is no longer with us, his appointment brought out the potential of thousands of young people across the country. He showed them that life in the refugee camps, harsh as it was, did not mean the end of hope.

Human rights is one of the core principles of the United Nations. We are working hard to ensure respect for the human rights of all people. Our establishment of institutions such as our National Human Rights Commission, which is mandated to protect and promote human rights, will be a significant step in that direction. Vital legislation on human rights, such as the soon-to-be-approved sexual offences bill, will provide the tools to fight impunity for perpetrators of sexual crimes. However fond we are of our traditions, that should never be a reason to condone impunity. My Government is determined to find ways to harmonize our traditional dispute-resolution approach and the conventional justice system in a manner that respects the human rights of its people.

The United Nations continues to be the world's most important shared platform for nations to develop and strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations. It is a core United Nations principle for States to respect one another's political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is a principle that should be promoted and upheld at all times, especially when engaging with fragile States, such as Somalia.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to add my voice to those supporting reform of the United Nations. The Organization has worked for peace and stability for decades, and I strongly believe that the Secretary-General's reform agenda will most certainly lead to a far more responsive and dynamic institution. As a country that has greatly benefited from the United Nations system, we have also seen that it can improve its overall efficiency.

With that, I would like to conclude by once again reminding all of us that we must redouble our efforts to focus on peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet. That will take collective recognition of the fact that what happens in one corner of the world can affect those in other corners, too.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hassan Ali Khayre, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Thabane (Lesotho): Allow me to begin by congratulating the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-

second session. His illustrious career as a diplomat gives us confidence that we will see a successful session, and I assure him of my delegation's full support and cooperation during his tenure. Let me also commend his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his excellent leadership of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. He handled that great responsibility very well and with much skill and devotion.

During the previous session, we also witnessed the appointment of the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, whose impeccable credentials and distinguished service within the United Nations, coupled with his wealth of knowledge and experience, leave us hopeful that he will handle the challenges of his new position with dexterity. We therefore congratulate him on his well-deserved appointment and wish him success in the long journey ahead. We also pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for a job well done. He performed the duties of his high office with consummate diplomatic skill and honour.

We meet once again for the seventy-second time in the history of the United Nations in order to appraise the world's political, security and economic situations. We do so at a critical juncture in human history. Now is the time for a true reflection on the role of the Organization in the twenty-first century, since it is on the United Nations that humankind places much faith and hope for a better life for all.

The pall of despair that descended on the world following the Second World War was eased by our forebears' adoption of lofty ideals when they came together in San Francisco and resolved

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war;
>
> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and;
>
> "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Sadly, today we speak of a world that is slowly regressing to resembling the one that existed seven decades ago. The multifaceted and complex challenges that have besieged us are threatening to erode the laudable strides that the United Nations has made since its establishment. Inter- and intra-State conflict characterizes the modern-day world. From the global refugee crisis to the spread of terrorism, the ability of the United Nations to effectively resolve conflict is being put to the test. The heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula, coupled with the flagrant violation there of Security Council resolutions and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, speak to the arms race brewing in that part of the world.

As if that were not enough, respect for human rights and the rule of law — the principles that speak to the very fibre of the United Nations — continues to be flouted with impunity. Women and children in particular face the worst forms of brutal abuse, especially in conflict-ridden countries. Poverty also continues to be a dreadful affliction for developing countries, undermining their efforts to re-orient their economies towards significant gains in real growth. The result is that most poverty-stricken populations are sometimes left with no option but to employ unorthodox methods for economic survival to sustain their livelihoods.

It is in that context that we welcome the theme for this session: "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". It resonates squarely with the principles that underpinned the establishment of the United Nations. That is what the Organization stands for. The complexities and dichotomies that characterize humankind's existence on the planet and the inequalities that prevail between developed and underdeveloped countries would be a thing of the past if we could remain true to our mission and focus on people on our development path.

While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embrace the concept of universal prosperity for all societies, we are all aware that, in essence, that ideal is still far from being realized. We must move forward cooperatively in our efforts to achieve peace and a decent life for all. It is incumbent on the entire international community to act in unison as we strive to restore peace and deploy a universal response to our goals. To that end, our immediate challenge is to come up with a new strategy that encapsulates the SDGs and multidimensionally integrates them into the concept, as the theme outlines.

We are cognizant of the fact that in Lesotho our destiny is in our hands and that the chief responsibility for sustainable and equal development resides with us. As a newly inaugurated Administration, we have set for ourselves the very lofty goal of restructuring all our important Government institutions. In that regard, we

intend to embark on an ambitious yet achievable reform programme. We are committed to fully implementing the decisions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and putting Lesotho on a path of inclusive reform that will consist of constitutional, parliamentary, electoral, public-sector and security-sector reforms. It is an exercise that will involve all stakeholders, who must engage with genuine and total commitment to establishing a stable political order that is conducive to economic development.

As the new Government of Lesotho, our resolve and commitment to implementing SADC decisions signifies our commitment to working together with our regional body in pursuit of lasting peace and security in our country and the whole SADC region. We have made good progress in the implementation of SADC decisions following the recommendations of Justice Mpaphi Phumaphi, which were laid out during his enquiry in Lesotho after the brutal assassination of Lieutenant General Mahao, Lesotho's Army Commander, in June 2015. Today I have to once again report to the Assembly with sadness and great humiliation the assassination of the current Army Commander, Lieutenant General Khoantle Motsomotso, less than three weeks ago, on 5 September, by two senior army officers, who were in turn shot and killed by the General's bodyguards. Despite such daunting challenges to our small mountain Kingdom's political and security instability, SADC is standing firmly behind us as a regional bloc to help restore peace, political stability, security and the rule of law in Lesotho.

On that note, I wantto thank SADC, our development partners, the Friends of Lesotho, the African Union and the United Nations for their unwavering support in ensuring that Lesotho's democracy is protected in its pursuit of economic g:owth and stability.

On the development front, I am happy to report that the Government of Lesotho is committed to maintaining fiscal discipline in order to stabilize the national economy and stimulate growth and business activity while preserving the environment. At the same time, we are relentlessly committed to combating crime and corruption at all levels of our society, in accordance with SDG 16, which recognizes that corruption undermines efforts to combat poverty and gender equality. It further acts as a tax on the poor when it comes to accessing their right to public services. We are aware that on our own, without the support of our cooperating partners, our efforts to root out corruption cannot yield the desired results; hence our urgent call to them to join forces with us in our crusade.

As a least developed country, we believe that the concept of development is meaningful only when it gives communities tangible benefits in a sustainable manner. It is indisputable fact that young people are the thread that holds together the fabric of every nation and that at the same time they can be major agents of change. It would be a serious and unwise miscalculation not to recognize them as our partners of today and leaders of tomorrow. In that regard, we emphasize the importance of young people's participation in decision-making at all levels. Job creation for young people also remains a priority. With reference to SDG 8, our global strategy for youth employment is set to be operationalized by 2020. Countries therefore have to develop strategies for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization. In that regard, the Government of Lesotho remains committed in its resolve to harness the energy of young Basotho men and women in order to further the advancement of the economy of our country.

Lesotho continues to deal with the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is more prevalent among young women, who are the backbone of our economy. The empowerment of women is a focus of our development policy. We believe that elevating them to positions of leadership in both the private and public sectors will lead to a more equitable and prosperous society in Lesotho. We recognize that poverty and the AIDS pandemic go hand in hand, and our poverty eradication policies therefore target the most vulnerable groups, including the elderly, AIDS orphans, women and young people. We remain committed to ensuring that those objectives are tackled, for they are key components of the SDGs.

On the economic front, like other landlocked developing countries, Lesotho continues to face challenges inherently linked to its unique geographic position. The burden of high transport costs and cumbersome and slow export processing procedures continues to impose serious impediments to our external trade. I must therefore mention the need for increased international assistance in infrastructure development and institutional capacity-building, as well as industrialization and enhancement of productive capacity, for all developing countries, not only the least developed.

Lesotho continues to support the maintenance of international peace and security. We are deeply disturbed by the ongoing violence in Syria and other parts of the Middle East. The rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has added another dimension to the scourge of international terrorism. It has become a force of destruction and generates mayhem on a global scale. We are encouraged by recent efforts aimed at shrinking the boundaries of the territories controlled by ISIL in Iraq and Syria. As a result of the ongoing violence in the Middle East and elsewhere, the world's refugee population has grown; there are more than 65 million displaced persons, including those fleeing hunger. That situation is intolerable, as it has created an environment in which young people have become vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist movements and human trafficking.

In recent years, Lesotho has faced prolonged droughts due to the El Niño effect, which crippled the entire Southern African subcontinent and led to food shortages and other hardships. The recent hurricanes that have devastated the Caribbean and parts of the United States, along with the torrential rains that have been witnessed in many countries, including floods of biblical proportions, are a stark reminder that climate change is with us and that urgent action is required in accordance with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which was concluded more than a year ago.

We reiterate our appeal that small countries such as Lesotho, including small island States, should be empowered with technologies for dealing with and adapting to climate-change challenges. Sustainable development will elude us without genuine commitment on the part of all, including our development partners. The principles of common but differentiated responsibility and economic might and capability between developed and developing nations will be critical to our success in building a sustainable world. We therefore call on the international community to continue mobilizing and providing additional financial resources to Africa for climate-friendly technologies to address both the urgent adaptation and mitigation needs of Africa and other developing countries. Similarly, we urge countries that have reneged on their support to the Paris Agreement to reconsider their position and return to the fold.

The eradication of colonialism is one of the most notable achievements accomplished by the international community through the United Nations. However, that business remains unfinished. The questions of Western Sahara and Palestine have defied solutions for a long time.

We reiterate our support for Western Sahara in its struggle for self-determination. Every day that passes without a change in the lives of the people of Western Sahara is a reminder to the world that we must renew our determination to fight the injustices perpetrated against the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. History will judge us harshly if we watch in silence as unjust treatment is meted out to the people of that African country. Our silence and inaction will leave an indelible mark of failure on our collective character. In the modern world the use of colonial tactics is totally unacceptable. In that connection, we call on the United Nations to remain resolute in its determination to rid the world of the scourge of colonialism. The agreement by the POLISARIO Front and Morocco to resume negotiations in order to reach a long-term solution has not gone unnoticed. We commend them for that bold step and assure them of our support in that noble endeavour.

The question of Palestine has been on the United Nations agenda for decades. We continue to believe that a two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders, whereby Israel and Palestine coexist side-by-side in equal sovereignty, is the most viable proposal for a permanent settlement to that vexing problem. The Palestinians too deserve to enjoy the right to peace, development and the sanctity of life.

Concerning the nuclear-disarmament landscape, the United Nations made significant progress a few months ago with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons with the goal of eventually achieving their total elimination. That is a historic achievement, especially in the light of the ongoing tensions in the Korean peninsula. The argument that nuclear weapons are a deterrent is a fallacy. Such weapons are a threat to human existence, and their possessors should do the right thing and renounce them in line with their international obligations. The Treaty should not remain a mere paper agreement: it must be ratified and implemented by all.

As I conclude, I would like to point out that we should continue to resist all attempts to undermine the global consensus that the United Nations has built around many issues of importance to our peoples. We

remain convinced that it is the only universal institution that can safeguard world peace and ensure the survival of all and sundry. For it to do so, however, the reform agenda of the United Nations must proceed without further delay, including reform of the Security Council. A Council that is transparent and representative of all regions, including Africa, will go a long way to fulfilling the ideals for which the United Nations was founded. Unilateral actions that defy civility and international law belong to the past. Let us march forward with unity of purpose, while focusing on our peoples and striving for peace so that we can all have a decent life.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Sir Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Integration of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Sir Louis (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Our Organization was founded amid the still glowing embers and simmering tensions of global war. In the shadows of widespread death and destruction, the nations of the world united in recognition of the fact that global challenges can be overcome only through collective action and international law, not misguided unilateralism or short-sighted self-interest. That recognition remains as valid today as it was 72 years ago, even as new threats to life and development have joined armed conflict as challenges demanding a concerted international response.

On behalf of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I would like to express our stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of Mexico as they are suffering the devastating effects of yet another earthquake. As I speak before the Assembly today, the island of Dominica has been levelled by a direct hit from Hurricane Maria, even as it was continuing to recover from the widespread devastation wrought by Tropical Storm Erika two years ago. No individual there has been spared. A series of hurricanes — Harvey, Irma, Jose, and Maria — of unprecedented intensity have struck the peoples of our region with unerring accuracy and rapidity.

The States and territories affected include the United States, Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Dominica, Cuba, Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, the United States Virgin Islands, Saint Martin, Puerto Rico and, today, the Turks and Caicos Islands. In a period of five weeks, each of those countries and territories has been struck with a force comparable to that of a weapon of mass destruction. Hundreds of people are dead. The damage to infrastructure, while still being calculated, is already estimated at more than $130 billion. The current Atlantic hurricane season is likely to be the most expensive in history. In terms of development, the countries affected will take years, if not decades, to recover from the devastating battering.

Let us make no mistake: the death and destruction wrought by this hurricane season are not merely the result of freak weather events or vengeful acts of God. They are the direct result of the acts and omissions of humankind. They are manifestations of climate change and the symptoms of the prescient predictions made by the overwhelming majority of scientists. Today almost every year is hotter than the preceding one; almost every hurricane season more intense; and almost every storm, drought and flood more destructive than its predecessors. It is a barefaced insult to the intelligence and experience of the peoples of island States and coastal areas to call climate change a hoax.

At this point, it is almost a cliché to reaffirm that small island developing States are the most vulnerable to climate change while contributing the least to the emissions that cause it. But that truism is the foundation of our just, urgent and unavoidable demand that the nations that have contributed most to climate change should also do the most to mitigate its effects and assist others in adapting to our dangerous new realities.

Our global community, in the great tradition of the United Nations and in the spirit of the founders of this Organization, came together through hard-fought negotiations to craft the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, an ambitious if imperfect agreement designed to arrest climate change and assist those most affected by it. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines views any attempt to disavow the freshly minted commitments of the Paris Agreement as an act of hostility, and we draw a direct, causal connection between any such abdication and the future death and destruction that island States face as the result of increasingly frequent and intense weather events.

The independent countries of Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Cuba, the Bahamas and Dominica require the special and sustained support of the international community. These countries need immediate and massive assistance with both immediate relief and long-term reconstruction. That assistance should be concessional and free from antiquated notions of per capita gross domestic product. We therefore join other countries in calling for a donor conference to address the daunting challenges that those countries face. Only together can we recover.

Additionally, the Caribbean territories with special relationships to colonial Powers in the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands are in desperate need of assistance and have limited options for international cooperation, given their unique political status. Despite our small size and limited means, the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have already sent emergency assistance to these territories, as well as technical expertise. We urge administering Powers and potential donors alike to look past political issues and look instead to the needs of the affected peoples and communities. We also call on the colonial Powers to accept their full responsibility for the recovery and rehabilitation of these territories.

The rise of climate change as an existential threat of our era has not replaced the persistent peril of armed conflict across the globe. The human suffering in Syria, Yemen and Myanmar demands greater international attention and action. Similarly, the potential threats to international peace and security posed by tensions on the Korean peninsula, among the Gulf States and in the State of Palestine require persistent and prioritized diplomacy.

Diplomacy, though difficult, is always preferable to the alternative. The United Nations was founded and continues to exist on that fundamental premise. Frustration with the pace of negotiation and mediation cannot give way to the intemperate urge to impose quick military fixes on inherently political problems. Nor can it lead to an illogical interpretation of sovereign self-interest that justifies trampling on the sovereignty of other States.

Sovereignty is not a sword but a shield. The United Nations is not a forum for measuring whose sovereignty is bigger, or whose military is better equipped to pursue its narrow, short-term self-interest. We are a community founded instead on the assumption of the sovereign equality of all States, rich and poor, large and small. One nation's ability to destroy another does not endow it with special rights, but rather profound responsibilities, chief among them restraint. President Theodore Roosevelt's realpolitik adage of speaking softly while carrying a big stick — whatever its limitations — cannot be replaced by irresponsible, bellicose sabre-rattling that inches us closer to the types of conflict that the Assembly was created to prevent.

In that context, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines views with alarm the continued threats to the sovereignty of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. To be sure, the people of Venezuela have endured an extended period of political conflict, which has exacerbated other difficulties in the country. But with illegal street violence dwindling and all political parties committed to the upcoming gubernatorial elections, the interventionist option increasingly floated by the United States and an imprudent Secretary General of the Organization of American States have no place in a modern Latin America.

Similarly, any threat, expressed or implied, to the sovereignty of the peaceful and noble Cuban people is an anachronistic throwback to Cold War posturing without any logical justification, particularly in the light of the recent détente between the Governments of Cuba and the United States.

Let us be clear. Latin America and the Caribbean is a zone of peace. There is no conflict, challenge or disagreement in our region that requires military intervention in any way, shape or form, be it covert, overt or by proxy. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is resolutely and implacably opposed to any attempt to foment external interference or interventionist activities against any nation in our hemisphere.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was honoured to host the 2017 Caribbean regional seminar on decolonization, consistent with our responsibilities as one of the many Caribbean and Pacific small island States and former colonies in Africa and Asia whose self-determination was achieved under the watchful eye of the United Nations. The inconvenient truth is that the decolonization process remains incomplete, and it will be essential to intensify our efforts to achieve the goal of full self-government through the attainment of a legitimate political status option providing for absolute political equality. That principle must be the guiding standard applicable to the small island territories, just

as it was the standard for decolonizing other former colonies. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains fully seized of this issue and was pleased to play its part in completing the unfinished business of decolonization by hosting the 2017 seminar and previous seminars in 2011 and 2005. It is in that spirit that we have great sympathy for the legitimate aspiration of the people of West Papua to freedom and independence and to govern themselves and guide their own destiny through legitimate political means.

The issue of United Nations reform has justifiably gained momentum in recent months. As a large, aging bureaucracy, the United Nations has not demonstrated the nimbleness and responsiveness it needs for our new and fast-paced modern challenges. However, the areas demanding the most immediate and far-reaching reforms are not budgetary allocations or staffing matters but rather the political and organizational underpinnings of the most fossilized structures of the United Nations and the wider international architecture.

The litmus test for any serious talk of United Nations reform is reform of the Security Council. Those who pay lip service to reform while ignoring the need for a reformed Council — with expanded permanent membership, a special voice for island States and radically revised working methods — are simply engaging in an exercise where they attempt to reduce their financial responsibilities while maintaining an unjustifiable grip on disproportionate and outmoded power arrangements.

Similarly, the lessons of the global economic and financial crisis have yet to be implemented. Our inactivity has produced an extended period of halting and uneven recovery and an iniquitous globalization whose unequal distribution of benefits and burdens is spurring a popular backlash worldwide. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council must squarely and frontally address reforms to our international financial architecture, in particular the Bretton Woods institutions.

For Caribbean States, the issue of declining correspondent banking relationships is a grave and gathering threat to our continued growth and ongoing connections to the global economy. The United Nations, the Group of 20 and international financial institutions cannot shirk this issue as a private banking matter. It is a threat to development of the highest priority, and it demands a coordinated, political solution.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines applauds the President's sustained focus on sustainable development. Our Government has located the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the centre of its national development strategies. In the areas of climate change, pollution and biodiversity, we have banned Styrofoam products and turtle-hunting, tightened restrictions on internationally permitted indigenous whaling activity and implemented new coastal protection regulations. We are investing heavily in geothermal and solar energy and expect to generate 80 per cent of our energy needs from renewable sources within the next three years.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also dedicating special funding to technology-based entrepreneurs, improving wages and occupational health and safety legislation and investing in new modern medical facilities. We have launched an innovative zero-hunger fund with interventions targeting food insecurity and unemployment in vulnerable populations, while simultaneously creating a contingency fund to aid in disaster recovery efforts.

We are serious and committed to the achievement of all the SDGs by the year 2030. Nonetheless, as the President and the Secretary-General have recognized, the achievement of the SDGs requires international cooperation and the commitment of new and additional funding. Ours is the only body that can generate and sustain the necessary political will and resources to give life to the ambition of the SDGs. The link between development and peace is well established, and the link between peace and the United Nations is immutable.

A substantial part of the backdrop or context of the continuing socioeconomic challenges of the nation States of our Caribbean civilization is the awful legacy of underdevelopment that European colonialism has bequeathed to us as a consequence of native genocide and African slavery. The international campaign for reparations from the former colonial Powers in order to assist in repairing this malignant legacy is urgent and timely. It deserves the full support of the Assembly, particularly within this decade which has been declared to be focused on the uplifting of persons of African descent.

I repeat yet again the necessity and desirability for the responsible authorities in the Dominican Republic and the United Nations to address properly, and once and for all, the respective issues of the denial of citizenship for persons of Haitian descent in the

Dominican Republic and the cholera epidemic that some United Nations troops in Haiti initiated.

In the quest for deepening multilateralism, international cooperation and peace, the glaring injustice of the continuing denial of Taiwan's membership in the special agencies of the United Nations demands correction. The ghosts of a divisive past ought to be laid to rest. Taiwan's legitimate incorporation into the family of nations is long overdue. How can we neglect or deny 23 billion people who have been contributing so much to developing countries in every sector of their economy? How can we deny them entrance into the organs of the United Nations? It is unfair and unjust and should be remedied.

The President took the Chair.

The travails of the people of Palestine arising from the illegal occupation of their lands continue to haunt us globally. The General Assembly has repeatedly pronounced in favour of the rights of the Palestinian people, but the illegal occupiers, backed internationally by a handful of powerful States, have continued to thwart the will of the international community. Peace in the Middle East will remain a mirage unless the national rights of the Palestinian people are recognized and upheld in practice.

As we speak in this Hall today, we seek to amplify the echoes of the visionaries of yesteryear who stood at this rostrum to give voice to the system of multilateral cooperation and mutual respect that has defined our post-war existence. New challenges may arise, but the solutions — diplomacy, ambitious action and respect for the sovereign equality of all Member States — are eternal. Multilateral diplomacy may be messy and imperfect; international law may be frustratingly inconsistent; the path of development may be beset on all sides by natural and man-made obstacles; but, united, we have always been greater than the sum of our individual parts, and together there is no challenge too great for the collective wisdom of our great nations and our great institution.

As new challenges confront us, let us hew ever closer to the undeniable strengths of our Organization to make this a better world for all of us.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Prak Sokhonn, Senior Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Sokhonn (Cambodia): On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and on my own behalf, I congratulate you, Mr. Lajčák, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his commitment and dedication to the work of the previous session.

I join previous speakers in expressing my deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims of the earthquake in Mexico and their families.

My delegation finds the theme of this session of the General Assembly extremely relevant. It appropriately sums up the six overarching priorities of the presidency, which respond to the global megatrends currently facing our world. The interaction between population growth, massive migration movement, climate change and food insecurity renders these megatrends all the more worrisome.

Similarly, the same forces of globalization that in the past have made us so interdependent are exposing deep flaws in the existing international order. A quarter century after the end of the Cold War, the world has become, by many measures, more complex and challenging than ever before. Today, our world is increasingly multipolar, which creates chaos and turbulence as the competition between the major Powers becomes more confrontational. We are more interdependent but more unequal; we are more prosperous and yet millions are still afflicted with poverty. All these factors have contributed to a sense of a world out of balance, and that is the paradox that defines our world today.

While we share the deep concern about the situation on the Korean peninsula, we appeal to all the parties concerned to exercise the utmost restraint to avoid provocative activities and remain committed to peaceful and constructive dialogue so as to defuse tension and promote trust and confidence in the region.

Another factor destabilizing collective security is the unilateral and illegal embargo on Cuba. We ask that this violation of international law be brought to an end.

While it is true that globalization and technological progress have dramatically increased global trade and wealth all over the world, it is equally true that they have been factors in the increases we are seeing in inequality, social tensions and, sometimes, conflicts.

To a large extent, those fragilities are responsible for many of today's conflicts and threats.

One of those threats is terrorism, from which no country is spared. Defeating that transnational threat requires a firm global resolve to comprehensively address it in all its forms, starting with the symptoms and root causes of radicalization and confronting the issues of foreign fighters and financing for terrorism and other forms of support.

Let me touch on two topics of relevance — the theme of this session of the General Assembly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and climate change.

The 2030 Agenda is inextricably linked to many of the issues that perturb the world today, the most pressing being climate change, which is not only a direct threat in itself but is also a multiplier of many other threats — from poverty, diseases and food insecurity to mass migrations and regional conflicts. In our view, climate change is a global human security issue that presents a serious and unprecedented threat to global peace and security more generally.

Cambodia is regularly ranked among the top 10 most vulnerable countries globally, with extreme weather events damaging our infrastructure, severely affecting agriculture, disrupting economic activities and hampering crucial social services for our vulnerable groups. While our contribution to climate change is negligible and our domestic resources quite limited, we have nonetheless made clear commitments to low-carbon development and look forward to developing partnerships with other progressive nations that are committed to addressing this formidable challenge cooperatively and fairly. I am pleased to note that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change acknowledges the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, meaning that they are based on countries' respective capabilities and varying national conditions. Indeed, the 2030 Agenda is our boldest agenda for humankind and it is aimed at fostering fair globalization.

Cambodia has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable development over the past two decades. Specifically, our target of reducing the poverty rate to 19.5 per cent by 2015 was achieved ahead of schedule. We have received a United Nations award for halving hunger before the deadline. Cambodia is also among the top seven performers globally for its improvements in the *Human Development Index* between 1990 and 2015.

With regard to peace and security, Cambodia is proud of its unwavering commitment to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. More than two decades ago Cambodia received United Nations Blue Berets deployed on their peacekeeping mission. Since 2006, we have dispatched more than 4,700 troops to take part with great and commendable success in United Nations peacekeeping missions in a number of hotspots in the world, such as the Sudan, South Sudan, Lebanon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Syria and Mali.

As all delegations know, peacekeeping operations are not without security risks. Peacekeepers continue to come under attack from armed groups and increasingly from terrorists. In May, rebel ambushes in the Central African Republic killed and wounded our Cambodian peacekeepers. Let us pay tribute to those who have died while serving under the United Nations flag and remind ourselves to acknowledge their contributions in the transformation of many countries from battlefields to peaceful States.

(*spoke in French*)

I now wish to address the issues of human rights and democracy, since my country is regularly targeted in that regard by some countries and United Nations agencies, as well as by international non-governmental organizations active in these areas.

Cambodia upholds the universal principle that we all possess fundamental human rights. We therefore see no incompatibility between national sovereignty, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and international monitoring of the application of those rights, provided that it is impartial and takes all pertinent factors on the ground into account, and that observers harbour no prejudice or prejudgement against democratically elected authorities.

Now, what is the reality? To get straight to the point, assessments of human rights situations vary according to the political predispositions of certain great Powers. The same reasoning holds true for some big international non-governmental organizations whose agendas are far from politically neutral. The issue of human rights and democracy comes up only when the specific interests of certain major Powers are at stake, depending on the vagaries of the moment. Otherwise, all we hear is total and often complicit silence.

My country suffered from the deliberate political instrumentalization of human rights and democracy for

more than 12 years, during which time the international community denied the existence of the most terrible mass crimes. Today, as a survivor of the genocidal Pol Pot regime, I am pained and shocked to hear the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia refer to the crimes perpetrated by that regime as mere disturbances. We are subject to incessant criticism on matters that are reported in a partial and biased manner. Those reports always blame the Government and portray the opposition as martyrs of democracy and human rights. They invariably and exclusively target the Government, while the wrongdoings and illegal behaviour of the opposition are never or rarely mentioned.

What country represented in the General Assembly would refrain from acting when opposition politicians incite people to remove border posts, ignite vile hysteria with racist remarks and publish false treaties and fake maps to make people believe that some parts of the country have been annexed by neighbouring States? What country endorses defamation and slander? In most countries, incitements to racial hatred, xenophobic statements and speeches of the extreme right are severely denounced or even condemned, as we have just seen with the events of Charlottesville. While such actions are the daily language of the Cambodian opposition, they have never been condemned or raised by non-governmental organizations or the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia.

The latest attacks on the Royal Government of Cambodia pertain to the expulsion of an institute affiliated with a foreign political party that, under the cover of democracy training, deliberately supports the opposition and violates our law; the closure of a tax delinquent foreign newspaper; and the arrest of an opposition leader who, in a recorded interview, confessed to being an agent of a major Power working to overthrow the Government. In what country would such behaviour by a foreign Government be tolerated? We have not acted arbitrarily but rather completely in accord with provisions of our specific laws.

We can learn an important lesson from the history of my country. When we were forced to choose a path set by some Western Powers, Cambodia ended up suffering one of the most horrific human tragedies of the last century. We must recognize that it was the Cambodian Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen and with its own homegrown methods, that secured peace for the country in 1998. It was a striking demonstration of the fact that certain practices imposed from the outside are often part of the problem rather than the solution.

Today we are accused of undermining democracy because, under existing laws, we are prosecuting and punishing people who violate the law. Those who criticize or even threaten us refuse to take into consideration the crimes committed by those whom they protect.

While acknowledging with sincere gratitude the very positive and important contributions of many countries to peace and economic development in our country, I would like to conclude by affirming that the discourse of certain Governments concerning human rights and democracy will be relevant and credible only when those countries first apply to themselves the same standards of treatment that they apply to their assessments, criticisms and condemnations of others.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.